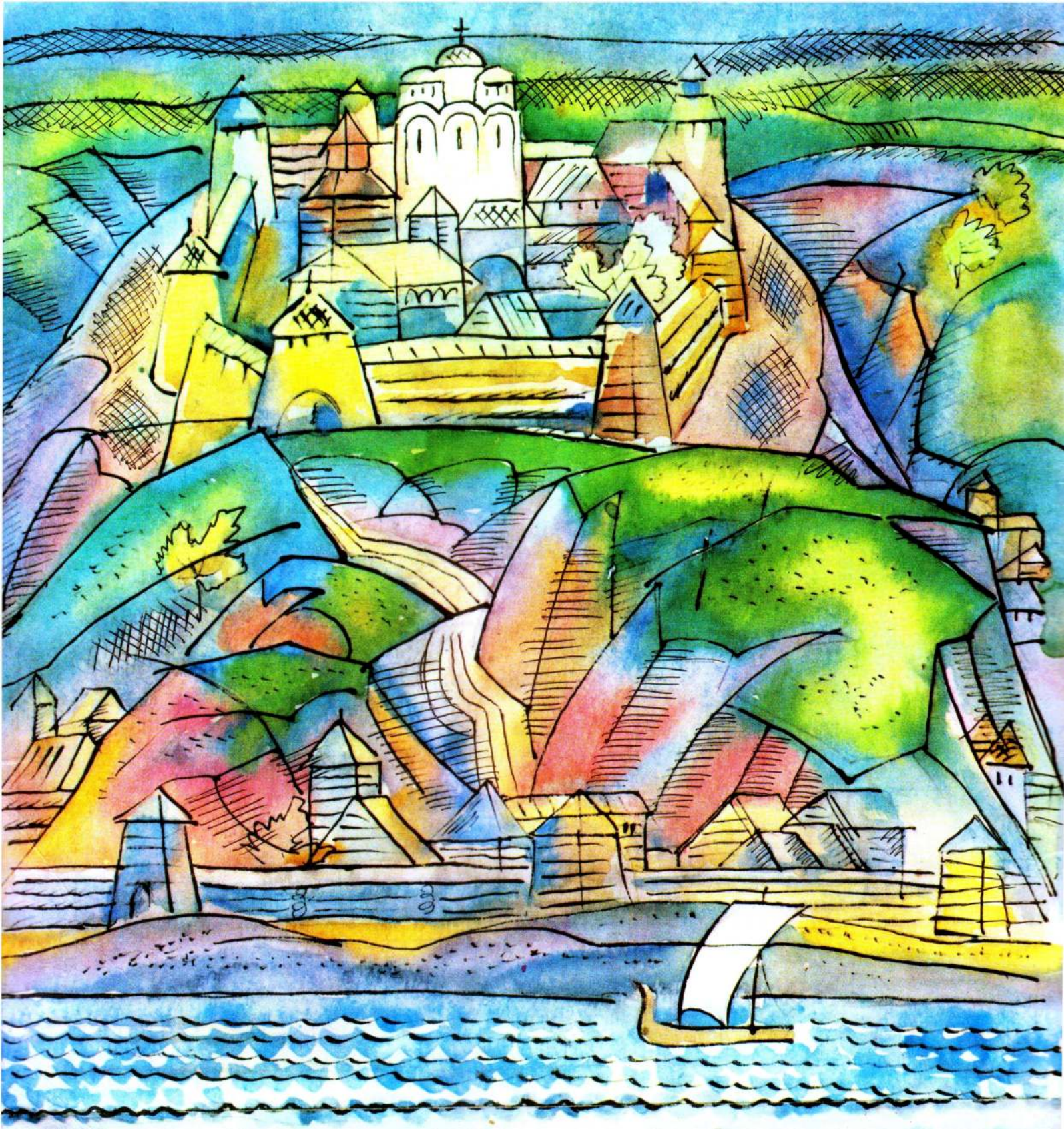
KIRILO KOZHUMYAKA

Ukrainian
Folk
Tale



KIRILO KOZHUMYAKA

Ukrainian Folk Tale

TRANSLATED FROM THE UKRAINIAN
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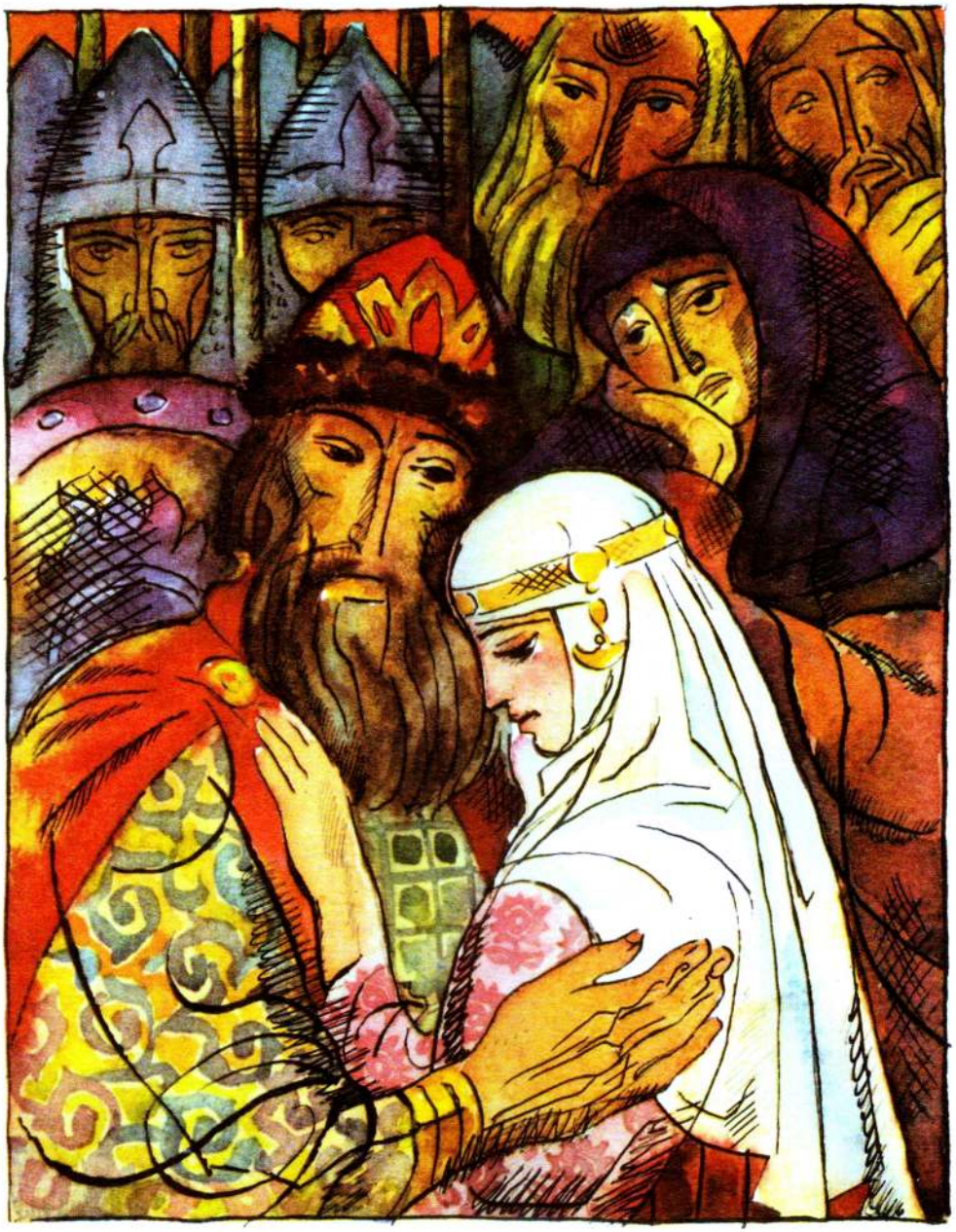
Once upon a time there was a prince who ruled in Kiev, while outside the city there lived a dragon to whom the people had to deliver a youth or a maiden every year. At last the turn came for the daughter of the prince to be sacrificed. What could the prince do? His subjects had given up their children, so he had to do the same. The prince sent his daughter away to the dragon. Now, the princess was so beautiful that there are no words to describe her beauty. The dragon fell in love with her. Once she made up to him and coaxed:

"Tell me, is there any man on earth who could get the better of you?"

"There is such a man in Kiev on the bank of the Dnieper River," the dragon told her. "When he lights a fire in his house the smoke goes up to the very heaven. And when he takes hides to soak in the Dnieper, for he is a tanner as his name Kozhumyaka suggests, he does not carry one, but a dozen of them at the same time. And when those hides get swollen with water in the Dnieper, sometimes I hold on to them to see if he can lift them out. But that makes no difference to him, for when he gives a tug he nearly pulls me out on the bank along with the hides. That's the only man I'm afraid of."

The princess memorized all this and began to think how she could pass this information home, so she could be set



free and return to her father. But there wasn't a living being near, except for one pigeon. She had fed that pigeon and made friends with it in the happy days when she lived in Kiev. She thought and thought, and then she wrote to her father.

"Dear Father," she wrote, "in Kiev there is a man named Kirilo, and his surname is Kozhumyaka. Send some old people to him to beg him to battle with the dragon and free me, a poor wretch, from prison! Entreat him, dear Father, with words and gifts, and take care that he doesn't get offended at some casual word! I will be grateful to you and to him all my life."

That's what she wrote, and she tied the note under the pigeon's wing and let it fly out the window. The pigeon soared up into the sky and flew straight home to the prince's courtyard. The children happened to be running about the yard, and they saw the pigeon.

"Daddy, Daddy!" they cried. "Look, our sister's pigeon has returned home!"

At first the prince was overjoyed, but then he started to think and became sad.

"The monster has destroyed my child, I fear!" he said to himself.

Then he coaxed the pigeon to come to him and his eye fell on the note that lay under its wing. He snatched the note and read what his daughter had written to him.

He immediately called all his councillors to him.

"Is there such a man, who is named Kirilo Kozhumyaka?"

"There is, Prince. He lives by the Dnieper."

"How should we approach him, so that he won't get offended and would do what we ask?"

After some exchange of opinion they sent their oldest people to him. They came to his house, and with fear in their hearts they slowly opened the door, and stood terrified. Kozhumyaka was sitting on the floor with his back to them, and with his hands he was crumpling twelve raw hides to soften them. Only his great white beard could be seen swinging from side to side! Then one of the messengers sneezed:

"Achooo!"

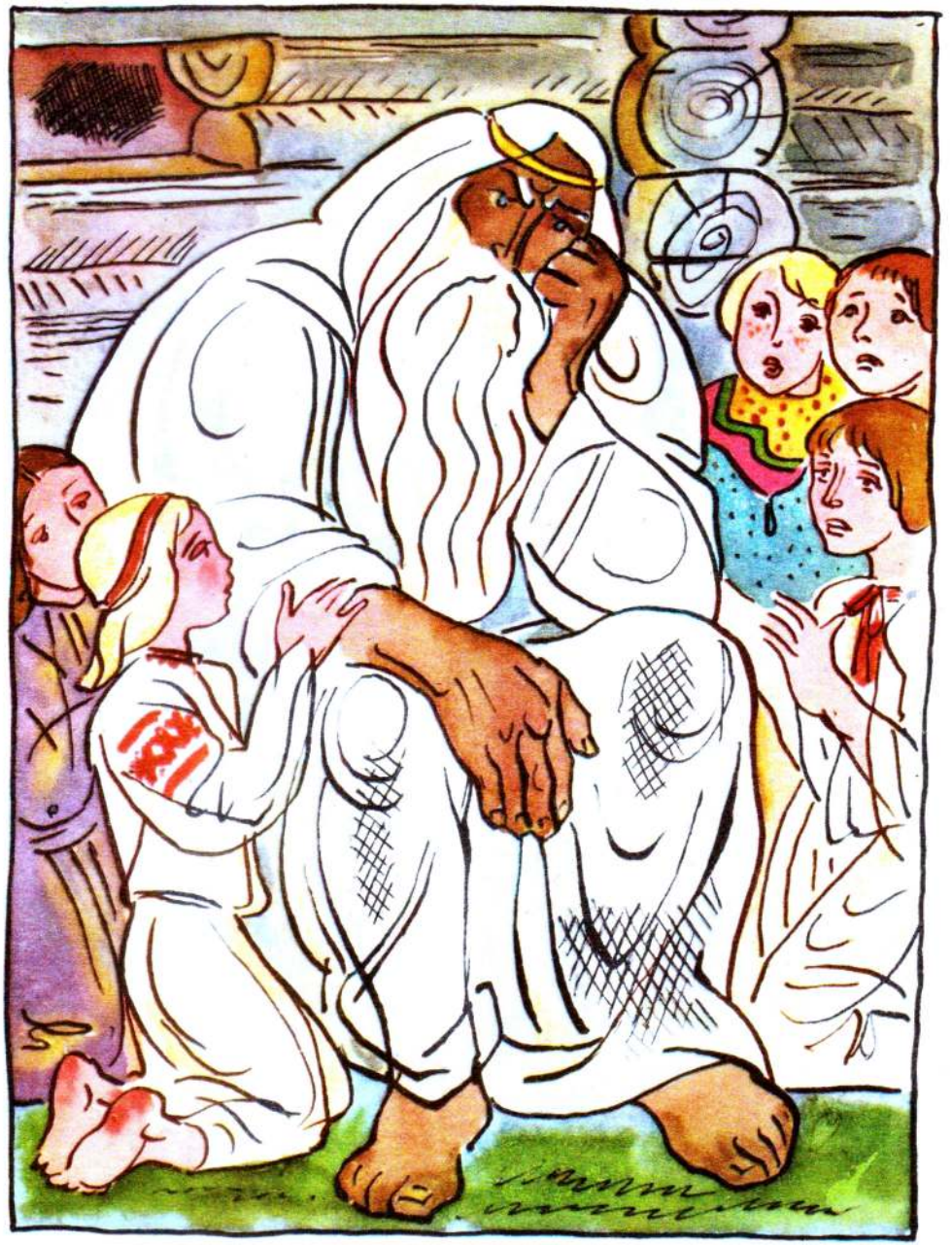
Kozhumyaka was startled by the unexpected noise and tore the twelve hides apart: rrrip! He turned to them, and they bowed low to him.

"It's like this, the prince has sent us to beg you..."

But he didn't want to look at them or listen to them. He was angry because he had torn twelve hides on their account.

They kept begging and pleading. They even fell on their knees...

But it was no use. They pleaded in vain, and then they went away with bowed heads.



What was to be done now? The prince was sad. So were the councillors.

"Perhaps we should send some younger people to him?"

They sent younger messengers, but they fared no better. Kozhumyaka only sat and puffed, as though they weren't there. That's how badly he was upset over those hides.

Finally the prince got an idea and sent the little children to him. The children came and began to beg, and when they fell on their knees and began to cry, Kozhumyaka couldn't hold out any longer. He shed a tear himself, and said:

"All right, I'll do it for you."

He went to the prince.

"Give me twelve barrels of tar and twelve wagons of hemp," he said.

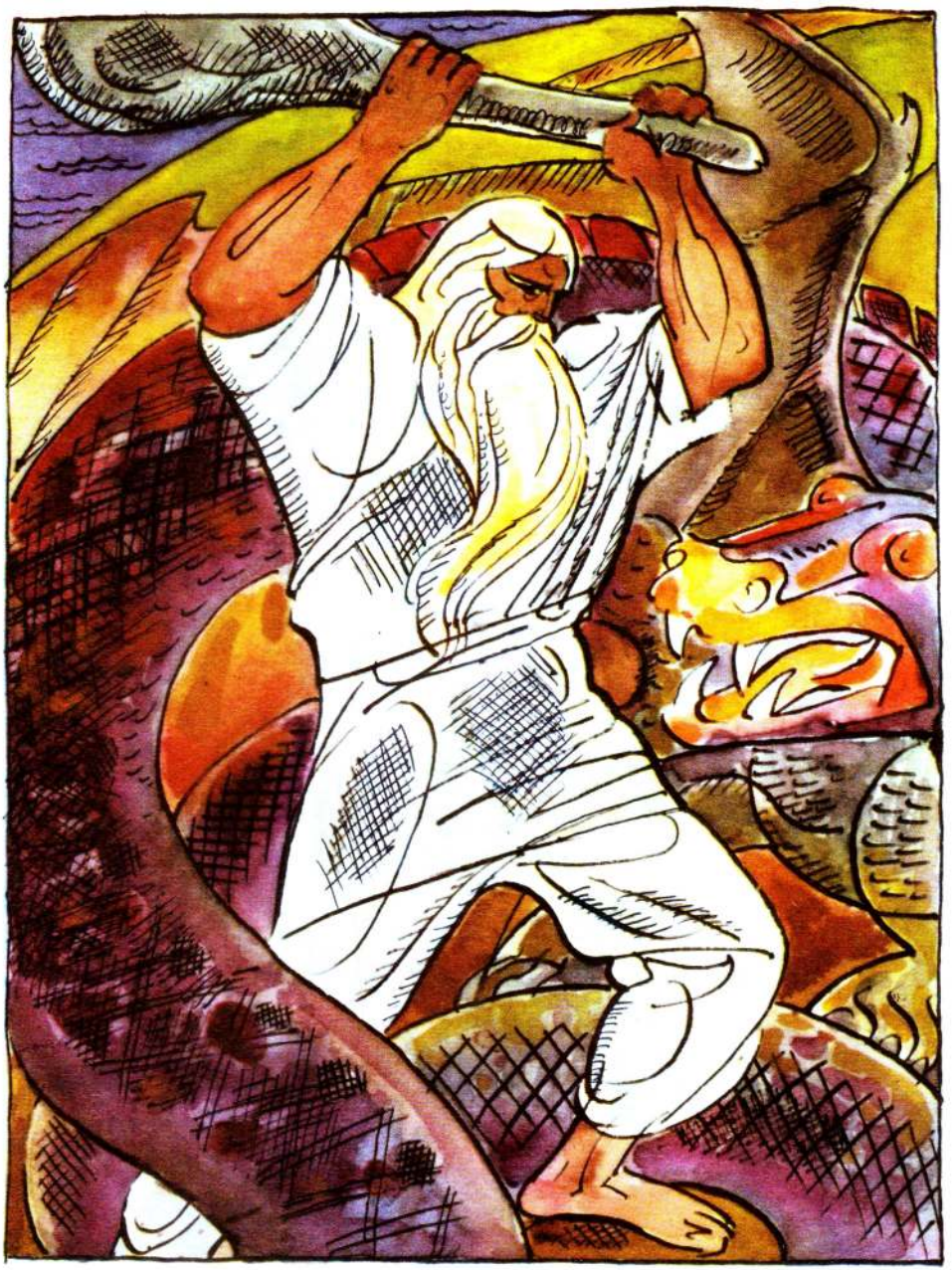
He twisted hemp about himself, daubed himself well all over with tar, took a club that must have weighed a quarter of a ton, and went to meet the dragon.

The dragon asked him:

"What's this, Kirilo? Do you come in peace or to fight?"

"I'll not make peace with you! I'll fight you, you cursed monster!"

And they began to fight so vigorously that the very earth trembled. Every time the dragon made a dash and sank his fangs into Kirilo, he tore away some tar, and the next time



he dashed in and bit, he got a mouthful of hemp. But whenever Kirilo struck him a blow with his heavy club, he drove the dragon straight into the ground. The dragon grew hot, as though he were on fire. And while he ran to the Dnieper for a drink and a dip in the river to cool off, Kozhumyaka wound himself about with hemp again and tarred himself. Every time the cursed monster leaped out of the river and rushed at Kozhumyaka, he got it – whang! whang! – with the club. They fought and they fought until sparks flew and smoke came from them. Kirilo heated up the dragon even more than a blacksmith heats a ploughshare in his forge. The monster was heaving and choking already, and the ground was trembling under him.

And all the while bells were ringing and the people stood on the hills motionless with clenched hands, waiting to see what would happen. Then there was a mighty blow and the monster fell to the ground so hard that the very earth shook. The people on the hills clapped their hands and shouted: "Give it to him, Kirilo! Give it to him, Kozhumyaka!"

After he killed the dragon, Kirilo freed the princess and returned her to the prince. The prince didn't know how to thank him enough. And since then the place where the mighty tanner lived has been called Kozhumyaki.

КИРИЛЛ КОЖЕМЯКА

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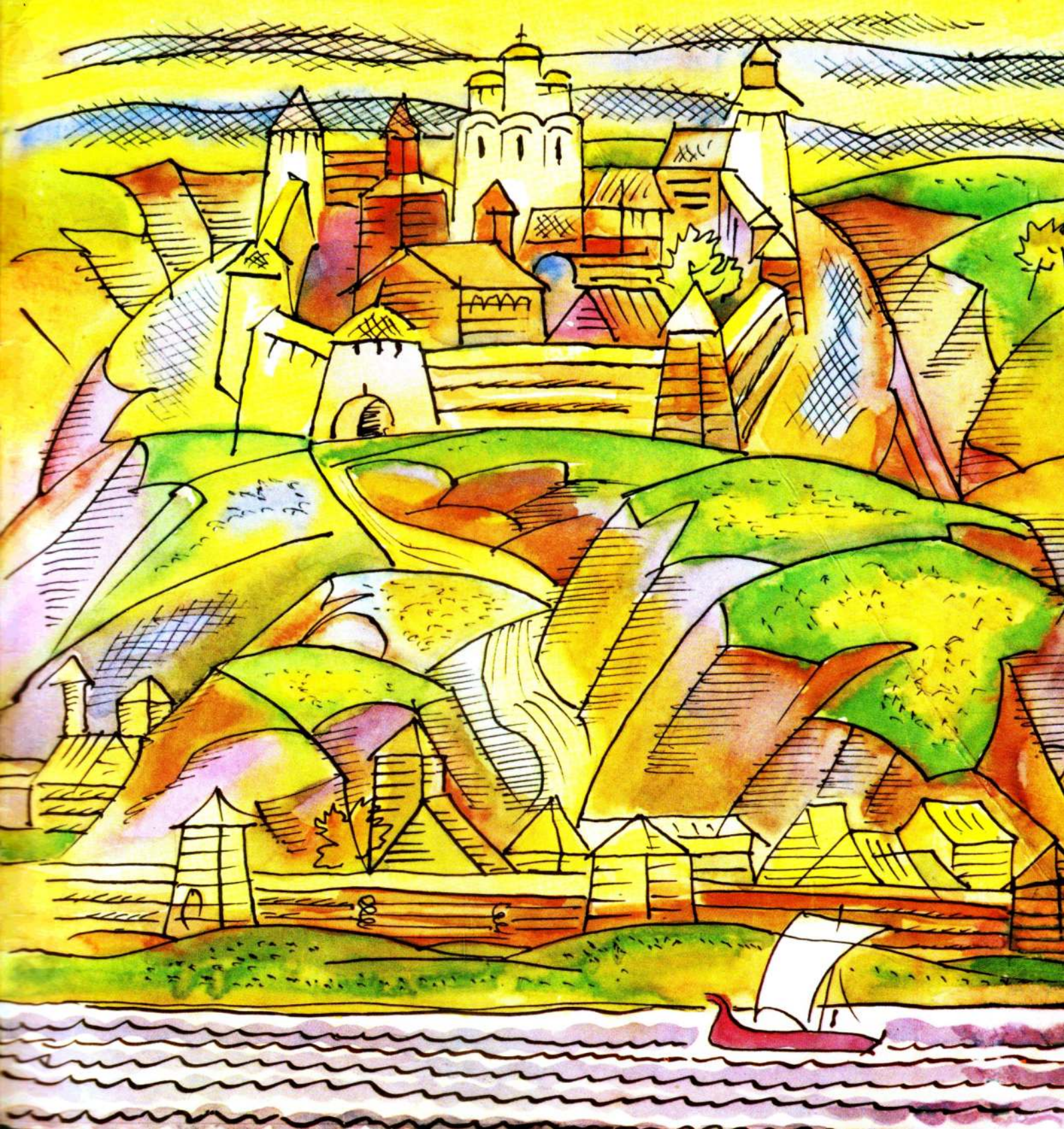

YOUNG READER,

So, it's a happy end after all. The fearful dragon is killed, and the princess has returned to her father in the city of Kiev. This city, as well as the Dnieper River, are not from the world of fantasy, but they really exist. The Dnieper is the main river in the Ukraine, one of fifteen equal and free republics which make up the Soviet Union. Kiev, capital of the Ukraine, is about fifteen hundred years old. The story you have read was printed in Kiev. If you liked this book and want to read more interesting stories, write to

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